Contents: Book Review, Personal Ads, Note from Editors

NORTH Bi NORTHWEST

Newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services

December 1996/January 1997 $2.50 VOLUME 9, NUMBER 6

A Horse and Carriage
by Erica Avery

I almost got married last month.

My partner of two years had recently obtained health insurance through his job. None of my five jobs provides me with health care, and I expect I'll be eligible for Medicare before we ever see universal health coverage in this country. The only way I could be covered through my partner's insurance is to marry him. If we were of the same sex, all we would have to do is live together for six months (we already have), and we would be considered domestic partners. But because we are of the opposite sex, we have to marry. Of course this is discriminatory, but it only highlights the ridiculousness of not allowing people to marry a person of the same sex. The health insurance company has had to determine the "marriage-equivalent," and they've set it at six months of cohabitation.

Okay, we thought, big deal, we'll get married. It's just for health insurance purposes, it's only a legal document, it won't affect our relationship. No wedding, we'll just sign the papers and have it done. And we'll be due for all those great advantages we hear that married people are eligible for that people with same sex partners are denied! Tax breaks! Cheaper car insurance! Joint health club memberships! The blessings of elderly relatives!

Well, we don't drive, can't afford a health club, are on good terms with our families already, and would actually have to pay higher taxes. This last was the clincher. I worked the numbers every way I could think of, and even if we filed jointly we would have to pay more money in taxes than if we were single. If we made more than about $25,000 a year we would start to benefit from marriage, but we don't—so much for the government supporting family values for poor people.

What was temporary health care coverage worth to me, someone who has no apparent health problems? After all, he won't have this job forever.

Still, I wanted to thoroughly research the idea to see if it was a viable option. I called city hall, a justice of the peace, the IRS, the women's council and a couple of lawyers, trying to get the story on just what exactly it means to be married. I got surprisingly little information. The most common response was surprise that I was asking, and a lot of information about what divorce means. Apparently marriage is just something people do, and only feel the consequences when something goes wrong or they want to undo it.

But I'm not comfortable with getting married just because it's "what you do" if you love someone. Same-sex couples have stayed together for decades, married in everything but name,

Continued on page 7

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North Bi Northwest is the bimonthly newsletter of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network. It is produced by women and is feminist in content. We feature news and events pertinent to the bisexual community, plus creative writing, artwork, and an advice column.

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We welcome submissions from women and men that concern feminism, politics, sexuality, or anything of interest to bisexual women. Help define our culture! Share your histories, anger, pleasure, energy. Send us your essays, poetry, photographs, drawings, book reviews, short stories, interviews, media reports, rants, cartoons, erotica, journals, theory, conversations and letters. You're important to us and what you have to say is important to everyone.

We accept submissions on disk with hard copy (PC), typed, legibly handwritten or by E-mail (nbinw@aol.com). If you send us something to print, you get a free issue; send six and get a year's subscription! Let us know what pseudonym you use, if you do not want to publish under your everyday name.

Views expressed in *North by Northwest* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SBWN. Inclusion in this publication does not indicate author's sexual orientation.

Deadline for submissions to the next issue: January 1, 1997

North Bi Northwest is printed on bi paper! (50% recycled)

SBWN Statement of Purpose

We are a group of women from diverse backgrounds working to create a feminist bisexual support network. We promote, in both the heterosexual world and in the lesbian/gay community, the understanding and acceptance of bisexuality as one of many valid sexual identities.

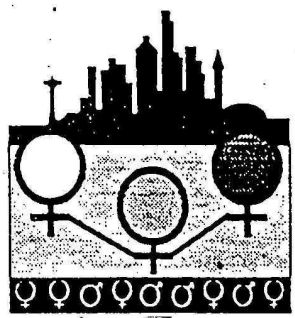
We regard ourselves as part of the community united against heterosexism and homophobia. We are dedicated to the right of all people to define their own sexuality, free from any social, political, or economic coercion. The discriminations we face based on our gender and our sexuality are not the only forms of oppression. We recognize that oppression is non-hierarchical and that none of us is free until all of us are free. We have invested ourselves in the feminist struggle to transform our culture into one free of all forms of bigotry, hatred, and exploitation.

We seek to provide a safe place for women to explore all aspects of their sexual orientation and identity. All women are welcome to attend SBWN activities. We are exclusively a women's group in order to create a safe space for women's expression and leadership. We come together to affirm ourselves and our choices.

North Bi Northwest

Editorial Team:
Julie Aguilar, Lizabeth Coller, Kellie Trujillo, and other volunteers

Distribution:
Bettykay, K Zimmer, and volunteers
Seattle Bisexual Women's Network



PO Box 30645
Greenwood Station
Seattle, WA 98103-0645

SBWN can always use volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. Give us a call or talk to a facilitator at a meeting.

North Bi Northwest is available by subscription (see above) or at area bookstores and newstands, including: in Seattle, **Red and Black Books, Beyond the Closet, Bailey Coy Books, Fremont Place Book Company,** and **Toys in Babeland.**

North Bi Northwest is a publication of the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network, a member project of Gay Community Social Services, PO Box 2228, Seattle, WA 98122-0228. *(Not for correspondence with SBWN or North Bi Northwest).*

From the

Editor...

Well, this is the last issue this editorial team will produce. However, we hope it will not be last issue of *North Bi Northwest* you receive. Although the newsletter will stop publishing for now, we still hope to find a new team to take over the production and to have the newsletter back in your mailbox in the next few issues. Both *North Bi Northwest* and SBWN are desperately in need of volunteers right now, our very survival depends on some friendly and helpful people donating some of their valuable time. Please read the descriptions below of what we are needing, and if you possibly can, give us some of your time. You can volunteer by calling our phone line at (206) 517-7767 and leaving your name, or by e-mailing us at nbinw@aol.com.

I would like to thank those who have made inquiries into helping with the production of the newsletter. We do feel that being involved with SBWN is important for the team as the newsletter represents the group. Therefore, the team members must be local.

The newsletter will be on a hiatus until we have solved the following problems. We are currently trying to secure a computer for the production of the newsletter. We are currently using personally owned computers for the production, and the printers at Kinko's. We do produce the newsletter on a PC with PageMaker and a word processing program. We have template files created and guidelines for the production. While the newsletter can be produced on a Mac, this will involve much more setup time. Also, we have compatibility problems between versions of PageMaker when printing our newsletter at Kinko's. The best solution would be to secure a computer to be owned by SBWN. A perfect solution would be to also secure a laser printer. If anyone has a 486 computer or above that could be donated to the group it would be very helpful. We do have one computer offered for use, but this would involve producing the newsletter out of someone else's home. Due to the production time involved, this would require the availability of at least one other computer to provide adequate access.

We have also had a problem with a lack of submissions. This has forced this issue and the last issue to be smaller than normal. It has also given us less ability to vary the subject matter in the different issues to provide the greatest variety of information and entertainment for you, our readers. This newsletter does rely completely on unsolicited writing, and authors to not need to be actively involved in the group.

We need an individual to be the contact for submissions, and to find authors. Ideally, this person would also be responsible for putting all submissions in electronic format to be easily inserted in the newsletter. You will also proofread all submissions for grammar and spelling.

A second individual, or the same, is needed for the layout of the newsletter. This individual will take all submissions and lay them out using PageMaker. The final printout will need to be in camera-ready format.

We need a third individual to oversee the paste up of the newsletter and duplication. Most advertisements and artwork must be added to the camera-ready copy by hand. Ideally, this person would also oversee the mailing list and duplication and mailing of the newsletter.

We conduct all collating, envelope stuffing, and labeling at SBWN meetings. We havevolunteers who mail and distribute the newsletters. Various writers are also available for newsletter columns and regular articles. While some time is needed to produce a quality newsletter, if the work can be shared, it does make it easier. We are asking for a minimum of one year commitment for all volunteers. Please contact us for more information.

SBWN is currently seeking a secretary. We have been without a secretary for several months and it has become crucial to find someone to take over this role. The secretary will answer letters and complete questionnaires sent to the group. She will also be responsible for keeping our information up to date with various community organizations. Also, if possible, the secretary will be responsible for collecting and distributing the organization's mail. You will need several hours to bring things up to date at first, but generally, the position requires only a couple hours a month. Please call (206) 517-7767 if you are interested in this position. Training is available.

Volunteering does have its advantages. You get the opportunity to meets lots of women in the bi-community, and you get a chance to be a strong part of the community as a whole. Our newsletter is distributed to more than 200 people and organizations around the world. And we have lots of room to grow. Please give us a call today. We will be having a meeting of all interested individuals soon, so at least check it out, we do not require a commitment immediately. Thanks!

News & Announcements

Volunteers Needed! North Bi Northwest and SBWN are in need of volunteers. Please see page 3 for information.

Jewish Family Service is holding a panel discussion to explore challenges and share helpful strategies with other families of sexual minority Jews. They will look at religious, social and practical issues. You can offer your perspective or just listen. The panel will be held Tuesday, December 17, 7:30-9:00pm at Jewish Family Service, Jessie Danz Building, 1601 - 16th Avenue in Seattle. For more information call Natalie Murkur Rose at 461-3240, ext. 208.

The Asian Lesbian and Bisexual Alliance continues to grow and put out a local newsletter. For more information about the group or the newsletter contact them at: PO Box 14232, Seattle, WA 98114. Phone: (206) 689-6155. Web page: http://www.javajungle.com/alba.htm.

Northwest Gay Times now has a web page! You can find them at: http://www.cfarm.com/garym/. It is still under construction, but check it out!

Join the Seattle Bisexual Women's Network and become a card-carrying bisexual!

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_____ Date

_____ SBWN Coordinating Committee

Memberships are $10-50 a year on a sliding scale, and are open to women everywhere. Members are entitled to discounts on events and purchases. See mail-in form on previous page.

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Submissions

If you've never been published here, you may not think of North Bi Northwest as your publication, but if you're here, it really is. Even if you don't think of yourself as a writer, we'd like to have your input; this is an SBWN project, not a mainstream magazine. Please help us editors/publishers out. We need input to keep going; we're now in our ninth year!

We welcome fiction, poetry, non-fiction and art. If you send us something to print, you get a free issue; send us six and get a year's subscription! Let us know what pseudonym you use, if you do not want to publish under your everyday name. Also, include a brief biography with each submission.

The deadline for the next issue is Wednesday, January 1. Entries should be sent to our PO Box, handed to a newsletter production member at a meeting, or sent by E-mail to nbinw@aol.com. If your submission is not in the following issue, keep looking - we will use submissions as space and content allows.

Personal Ads

Recently one of our meeting topics turned to personal ads. Many ads from a variety of local sources were available to look through as we talked about what clues each of us might get from their writers; did they tell us about themselves, or give us insight as to their own shopping list? Most agreed that critiquing the ads, and then writing one of our own is the easiest approach. That is just what we did collectively and in private. We looked at what we wanted that night and then, with a little fun combined with some silent reflection, we did it. The following ads are the result and some brave individuals agreed to have theirs printed in the newsletter.

#7529 - Can you come out and play with me? Attractive, married polysensual female seeks Bi F 24-34 for fun, friendship, physical intimacies, and exploration of sensualities. Like to eat out, go dancing, theater, movies, art, philosophy over lattes, and cards/ games over beer/wine. Let's do lattes/frapuccino's 1st. . . .

#3736 - Seattle north end M/Bi/F BBW looking for a special friend to share smiles/tears/walks/music and adventures with. Friendship may lead to LTR. If you are a happy self-confident person write. We'll walk and see.

#7335 - Tall, athletic, HWP, 30 something, W/Bi/F seeks same for recreation (outdoors and in!). Positive attitude and sense of humor a plus, safe sex, nonsmoker please.

#2428 - Do you enjoy the Seattle weather? Walking in the rain without an umbrella? Long walks on the ocean beaches inhaling the fresh salty air with the wind blowing through your hair. Looking for someone who enjoys flirting, good conversation, and movies. On occasion be able to let your hair down. If you're interested, let's chat.

#9268 - I enjoy long walks in the snow followed by a pillow in front of the fire. Hot nights spent dancing my cares away. My river runs calm because it runs deep. Come swim with me.

#7662 - Bi/S/W/F, 29YO, NS Atheist has weekdays off for dancing, theater and various outdoor activities. Seek romance. Hopefully leading to monogamous LTR. Shy right at 1st, but well worth the wait..

If any of these ads interest you, please drop a line to the advertiser by addressing your response to:

Bi Matches
c/o SBWN
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Be sure to put the person's pin number on the outside of the envelope so it can be forwarded unopened. Good luck lovers!

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Book Review
by Leilani

Exhibitionism for the Shy
Show Off, Dress Up and Talk Hot
by Carol Queen

All the answers to my questions about sexual showing off were in this book. The author once was very shy and understands the different perspectives of the shy and of the brazen. Much of the information in this book is universally applicable, for example; good sex—information, communication, and creativity, self-exploration of erotica, and self-pleasure. The text as you might imagine is easy to read and quite pleasurable. Many evenings of reading ended with rituals of masturbation fantasizing of what it would be like to act out; show off, talk hot, and/or watch. I must say I tried many outlined exercises with myself, my husband, and with co-sensual playmates. The result of incorporating what I learned into my sex play has set me free of another piece of society's shame, improved my already good sex life with myself and others, given my self-esteem and poise a boost, and provided my creative mind with fuel for new erotic options.

I'm not trying to suggest reading this book will change your life. The author doesn't make you "shed your inhibitions—you just have to exploit them creatively." Sexual confidence and self-understanding can benefit everyone. This book is set up to help you discover what you like and to use that information to bring greater pleasure into your life. The information, exercises, and appendices of phrases, emotions, feelings, erotic roles and dirty words are just to get you started.

I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys wearing provocative clothing, whispering sweet or explicit things into your lover's ear, or anyone who would like to do these things but is too shy. Timid or bold, you're bound to find "practical advice about the fine art of dressing up, showing off, role-playing, and talking dirty."

Advertising

North Bi Northwest welcomes advertising from bi-friendly businesses, individuals, organizations and services. Our advertising rates are as follows:

Business card size: $10/issue
Quarter page: $20/issue
Half page: $40/issue
Full page: $80/issue
2 consecutive issues: 15% discount
3 consecutive issues: 30% discount

For more information call (206) 517-7767 & leave a message.

Continued from page 1

showing the world that getting societal approval doesn't make a relationship any more real. That doesn't mean that approval isn't deserved, but certainly one doesn't need to be married to have a committed, long-term loving relationship.

However, a relationship that isn't a marriage can be uncomfortably difficult to define. Tim and I periodically discuss what to call each other, and don't yet have a satisfactory term. Partnersounds like we think we're a law firm, Lover sounds like we can't wait to be alone so we can get back to fucking our brains out. Boyfriend and Girlfriend are just too cute, and Friend is too evasive. We're not married, but we're not single either. We're not dating, we're not going steady, we're not engaged, and we're not just roommates.

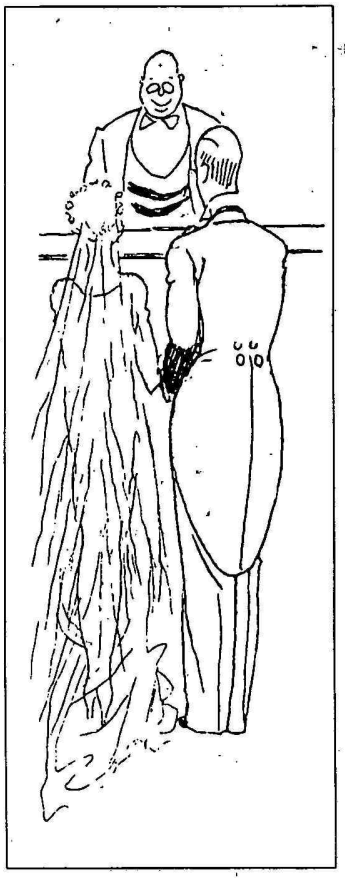
Because marriage exists, and especially because as an opposite-sex couple we have that option, if we don't marry there will always be the question of why we don't do so. A commitment ceremony would fall short of the "real" commitment of marriage, because it includes no legal obligation. A marriage kept secret, if that were possible, would free us from others' misconceptions, but lacks a crucial element of marriage, which is a public declaration of commitment. I suspect that marriage, because it is the only publicly sanctioned option for making a relationship official and genuine, could deepen our commitment and make us truly partners in a way for which there is no substitute. I can understand why some same sex couples care so deeply about not being denied this option. It's open to us, and if we don't take advantage of it, I believe there will always be, in the minds of both others and ourselves, the question of why we aren't making the utmost commitment to each other.

So why do I have such resistance to calling myself married? Our relationship is already like a marriage in every respect (or like the marriage I would want, anyway). We are monogamous, committed, and living together, sharing the housework and sharing a bed. We make major decisions together, we compromise, we take care of and accommodate each other every day. What is it I don't want people to think?

Maybe that I felt like I didn't have a choice. That I loved someone and the only step I could think of was marriage. That I was pressured, and succumbed to it. That I was afraid to be single. That I wanted approval. That I couldn't make it on my own. That I thought he would leave me, or he thought I would leave him.

I want to be in a relationship because I want to be there, not because I'm bound to. The commitment of marriage is about weathering the tough times and being there even when you don't quite want to at that time, and that aspect of marriage appeals to me. Yet because a marriage is so hard to undo, for legal and social reasons, I wonder if marriage might actually make our relationship less strong. If we're together after twenty years and we're married, it could be because we didn't want to go through divorce. If we're together twenty years and not married, it's probably because we're happiest together.

The decision isn't easy to make. If we married, we would become husband and wife, even if we didn't call it that, and we would constantly be trying to dodge the sexist connotations of those words. There is no guarantee that our self-images would remain intact in the face of pressure from both within and without to think of ourselves as a married couple. The long history of marriage as an economic arrangement designed to cheaply procure women's labor would weigh heavily upon us.



However, remaining unmarried keeps us in relationship limbo, muddling about in a nameless unofficial liaison, without health insurance. Unmarried, I'm dogged by the nagging feeling thatmaybe my resistance to marriage is really a cover for a fear of commitment, a reluctance to grow up.

The question of whether to marry was not only a matter of weighing the rewards of a deep lifelong commitment and the opportunity to acquire some cool kitchen gadgets for wedding gifts against the penalties of higher taxes and being party to a historically sexist institution. In the end, it came down to what felt comfortable. As long as I remain unmarried I retain a complete sense of myself as an individual, and full knowledge that I am where I am by choice, not through coercion. In the end, that is the choice I have made.

CALENDAR

For locations, confirmations, or more information, call the appropriate message machine and someone will get back to you (with discretion if requested). For **SBWN** events call **(206)517-7767**. For all other Seattle events, (**BiNet, SBMU, Polyfi, BiOut,** etc.) Call (206)728-4533.

***denotes mulit-gender events. $=not a free event**

Sun. Dec. 1 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Open Rap.*

Sat. Dec. 7 - **BiNet Mtg. 6:30pm**

Mon. Dec. 9 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Open Rap.*

Mon. Dec. 9 - **SBMU Mtg. 7pm.**

Sun. Dec. 15 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Show-n-Tell: Bi Books & Movies.*

Mon. Dec. 23 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *TBA.*

Sun. Dec. 29 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Massage for Relaxation.* Wear comfortable clothes.

Tue. Dec. 31 - **BiNet Movie Night 6:30pm.** Bay Theater in Ballard. Call 728-4533 to verify and for details.

Wed. Jan. 1 - **Input deadline** for *North Bi Northwest* February/May issue: Erotica.

Sat. Jan. 4 - **BiNet Mtg. 6:30pm.**

Mon. Jan.6- **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Social and Organizational Meeting*

Sat. Jan. 11 - **Polyfidelity potluck** 6:30pm, Pilgrim Congregational Church.

Sun. Jan. 12 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Bellydancing 101.*

Mon. Jan. 13 - **SBMU Mtg. 7pm.**

Sat. Jan. 18 - **GCSS Annual Mtg.**

Mon. Jan. 20 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Open Rap*

Sun. Jan. 26 - **SBWN Mtg. 6:30pm.** *Open Rap & Newsletter Collating.*

Tue. Jan. 28 - **BiNet Movie Night 6:30pm.** Bay Theater in Ballard. Call 728-4533 for details.

Upcoming SBWN Social Events:

January 1997 - Ski Trip. Details and time to be announced. Check web page or phone line for more details later.

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Local Groups at your Service

SBWN (Seattle Bisexual Women's Network): Support and discussion groups on alternate Sundays and alternate Mondays at 6:30pm. For more information, call our message machine. Note our telephone number: 517-7767.

SBWN's Social Crowd meets on the first Friday of the month for dancing at Sappho's, 9:30pm. And on the third Saturday of the month for dancing at The Easy, 10pm. All are welcome.

SBMU (Seattle Bisexual Men's Union): a men's anti-sexist support and social group with discussion meetings on second Mondays of the month at Pilgrim Congregational Church, room 304 (enter from 10th Ave.), and monthly social events (location varies).

Polyfidelity Discussion Group: Support group and community for people in or interested in multipartner relationships. Discussions and literature on responsible nonmonogamy, intimate networks, alternative relationships and community. Bimonthly potluck discussions, 6:30pm @ Pilgrim Congregational Church, 509 10th Ave E, Seattle; alternate month social events, venue varies.

BiNet, the Bisexual Network of Seattle: multi-gender, multicultural profeminist group. Meets the first Saturday of every month . Also, movie night on the last Tuesday of every month at the Bay Theater in Ballard. Call 728-4533 to get involved.

BiOut Speakers Bureau: available for engagements at schools, businesses, counseling centers, churches, etc. to provide information and answers about bisexuality.